

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KINSHASA 000655

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: CIAT MEETING WITH THE ESPACE PRESIDENTIEL APRIL 14

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reason 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) met April 14 with President Kabila and three of DRC's four Vice Presidents; VP Ruberwa was absent. The first two discussion points centered on progress being seen to disarm militias in DRC's northeastern Ituri District, and problems being experienced in the national military integration program and related disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) activities. Turning to elections, the CIAT Ambassadors again underscored the need for improved communication with the Congolese public regarding election planning; the Congolese leaders reported on a recent senior-level GDRC "inter-institutional" meeting which set out plans and strategies. The group also reviewed the status of Congo's draft constitution, now pending with the National Assembly. All participants discussed how to manage a formal six-month extension of the transition period beyond June 30, a process expected to be initiated formally when the National Assembly finishes work on the constitution. The Congolese addressed several questions to the Ambassadors regarding election support, and rumors of contingency evacuation planning by Western embassies. Following the pattern established at the last similar meeting, the tone of the meeting was businesslike and productive. End summary.

The Fourth Encounter

12. (C) Heads of Mission of the sixteen members of the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) met with the DRC "Espace Presidentiel" Thursday afternoon, April 14. The "Espace Presidentiel" consists of President Kabila and the four GDRC Vice Presidents; however, Vice President Ruberwa was absent, traveling to Gabon. The Congolese leaders were accompanied by Presidency Chief of Staff She Okitundu, Political Advisor Marcellin Shikambo, and Diplomatic Counselor Andre Kapanga. This was the fourth such CIAT/Espace meeting in a series initiated late last year to advance the DRC's transition process.

13. (C) President Kabila opened the meeting by noting that there had been positive developments since the last similar meeting, perhaps most notably in Ituri District. (Note: Ituri District is roughly the size of Liberia, located in the DRC's northeastern region bordering Uganda. End note.) SRSB Bill Swing picked up on the subject, reviewing the progress made by continuing MONUC and FARDC operations to disarm the illegal militia groups who have largely controlled the district in the past. Swing also followed up on a point from the last meeting, asking on behalf of the CIAT about promised progress to ensure government funds reach the Ituri District government authorities, and efforts to establish government authority on the border.

14. (C) Vice President Bemba, who has general authority over economic issues, fielded the questions by acknowledging that central government funds are still going to the provincial capital, Kisangani, and likely not being disbursed to district capitals. Per the pledge he made at the last meeting, however, he asserted that a new system should be implemented very soon to send funds monthly directly to Bunia, Ituri District capital, with similar procedures also to be implemented elsewhere. Bemba also reported that there had been problems finding customs service and other civil servants willing to be assigned to Ituri District, and particularly the volatile border area with Uganda. Nonetheless, he said that people are now being found which, together with security measures being taken for their protection, should begin to establish government authority and customs collections at the border in coming weeks.

15. (C) Kabila, Bemba, and Vice President Z'Ahidi Ngoma all praised current MONUC efforts in Ituri. On a related note, Z'Ahidi Ngoma asked about the status of MONUC and other efforts to implement Rwandan FDLR disarmament and repatriation following the FDLR's recent declaration in Rome renouncing their armed struggle. In response, Swing noted that the Kigali government, contrary to the tone of some reporting, is in fact making preparations for large-scale returns to Rwanda, and that MONUC is actively working to put arrangements in place to facilitate major FDLR disarmament and repatriation movements as quickly as possible. Swing also noted he assumes that the FDLR declaration would almost certainly be an important topic in the next U.S.-facilitated

Tripartite meeting, expected to be held April 21-22 in Lubumbashi.

#### Military Integration

16. (C) The Dutch Ambassador reiterated CIAT concerns that the rather quickly accelerated military integration program has several flaws and problems that need ongoing attention. Even more importantly, the lagging disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program needs to be improved. She referenced earlier-expressed concerns in particular about the DDR financial management committee. While VP Ruberwa would normally have the lead in dealing with security issues, Kabila responded in his absence, suggesting that the solutions earlier discussed for the management committee and CONADER (note: the agency responsible for DDR) should be adopted during a Friday Council of Ministers meeting.

#### Elections and Communication

17. (C) By prior arrangement, the Ambassador introduced the subject of elections planning. While noting that substantial specific planning efforts are now underway, he also expressed CIAT concern on the lack thus far of any apparent overall communication strategy from the government, parliament, and election commission to get information to the public. Such efforts are badly needed to convince skeptical Congolese that there is a real process underway to move toward elections. Regular, ongoing activities are needed, for example to supply weekly or more frequent progress reports, and all government members and others need to be actively involved in helping convey key messages. The Ambassador noted that several CIAT members have already stepped up their own complementary media and public outreach activities, consistent with prior CIAT/Espace Presidentiel discussions. The Ambassador also noted the CIAT's continuing concern regarding the Independent Election Commission's (CEI) efforts to find adequate office and storage space in Kinshasa and around the country.

18. (C) Apparently well-prepared on the subject, President Kabila reported (without reference to notes) on a meeting held two weeks before involving senior members of the executive, parliament, and the CEI. Agreement in this senior-level "inter-institutional" meeting had been reached on key issues, and an overall communications strategy mapped out. VP Bemba added that, per the results of the same meeting, the CEI is to initiate regular press briefings and appoint a designated spokesperson. In addition, he indicated that the government will be fully engaged in the overall communication effort. Bemba also reported progress on the issue of buildings for the CEI, including a Public Works Ministry team now traveling in the interior to identify adequate state-owned buildings that can be made available to the CEI quickly and at low cost. Kabila, Bemba, and Z'Ahidi Ngoma asked about the status of international funding support, and the timetable for materials needed to start voter registration.

19. (C) SRSB Swing reviewed funding status, noting that roughly half the USD 170 million pledged by donors to-date has already been received. Swing and others also reviewed the procurement status of voter registration materials, underscoring the importance of a scheduled prototype test late this month. Congolese and CIAT members all agreed on the fundamental importance of initiating actual voter registration activities before the transition's two-year anniversary on June 30. Responding to a Kabila question, Swing suggested that voter registration would likely take a minimum of three months once started.

#### Extending the Transition and Parliament

10. (C) Meeting participants reviewed the status of the draft constitution now pending in the National Assembly, and noted some concerns regarding specific provisions, primarily coming from the European Commission. All agreed on the importance of timely adoption of draft text by the National Assembly before the end of April. This timing, and the related voter registration prototype test also scheduled for late this month, led logically to a discussion of how to manage the process of a formal extension to the DRC transition, as provided for in Article 196 of the Global and All-Inclusive Accord (note: the DRC's de facto interim constitution).

11. (C) Bemba underscored that, contrary to the assertions of some (comment: meaning Etienne Tshisekedi and his UDPS party), there cannot be a "constitutional coup," and that it is important for the international community to make that clear to those who seem to favor such a scenario. All the Congolese and CIAT Ambassadors agreed that, per previous discussions, the preferred way to proceed would be a CEI notification to the parliament to invoke a six-month extension under Article 196 based on technical grounds around

the end of the month shortly after the adoption of a draft constitution. Constitutionally, this will require parliamentary approval. Z'Ahidi Ngoma implied that there was already agreement that the Espace Presidentiel members would clearly pronounce themselves at about the same time in favor of the extension to provide the needed time to complete elections planning. Clearly, corresponding communication from the CEI and international community should be part of the process as well.

112. (C) Bemba asked about rumors that at least some Western embassies had already advised their citizens to leave the DRC before June 30 in anticipation of civil disorder, or had prepared specific evacuation plans. Several Ambassadors denied this was the case, although all acknowledged concerns regarding the general security environment. Ambassador Meece noted that the U.S. Mission has initiated planning for July 4 celebrations - in Kinshasa. Kabila asked for an invitation, adding that the transition government had no evacuation plans itself.

Comment  
-----

113. (C) As was the case in the previous meeting, the tenor of the meeting was business-like and productive. Whatever tensions continue to exist between Kabila and Bemba were not displayed, although it is possible Tshisekedi's new public activism may be spurring somewhat greater unity within the Espace Presidentiel in the face of a perceived common enemy. Ruberwa's absence was unfortunate and limited discussion of security issues, although the Congolese participants were generally somewhat more forthcoming in this meeting than had been the case previously. The CIAT will probably be inclined to follow a similar format at future meetings, including de facto reviews of promised actions or policies from previous meetings. The next Espace meeting will probably take place in May. End comment.  
DOUGHERTY